

Catching the Fishing History of Lake Michigan, 1871-2006 \$9,000 *Partnering with Michigan Sea Grant and the Fishtown Preservation Society, this project will support new research of the 1870-1940 period and document the living history (1940-2006) of the fishery in the Leelanau Peninsula/Manitou Islands through interviews with surviving tribal and non-tribal fishermen, fishery biologists, and other local residents.*
Project Lead: Peter Fricke

The project was a cooperative effort by NOAA/NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries, the Fishtown Preservation Society, and Michigan Sea Grant College Program's Extension Service. The goal was to collect and archive information about the fisheries in Lake Michigan off the Leelanau Peninsula from 1871, when the U.S. Fish Commission first surveyed the area, to the present day. The information for 1871-1940 was obtained from the records of the U.S. Fish Commission and the Bureau of Fisheries, U.S. Department of Commerce. The information collected for 1940 to the present was through oral histories of fishermen and others associated with the fisheries from Leland, MI (Fishtown). The material obtained has been, and is being, used to develop interpretative programs and the conservation of Fishtown's working waterfront.

The project began on August 1, 2007 and ended on May 30, 2008. Tangible products from the project are an archive of 21 oral histories and a 278-page monograph, We're All Brothers Out There: Voices from the Leland Fishery at Fishtown, 1940-2006. Presentations have been made by the investigators, Peter Fricke (NMFS), Amanda Holmes and Daniel Stewart (Fishtown Preservation Society), and Mark Brederland (Michigan Sea Grant College Program) to local and regional organizations in Michigan and the Great Lakes states and nationally to the American Fisheries Society and the Society for Applied Anthropology. Drs. Holmes and Stewart prepared a radio spot using oral history material which was broadcast on Interlochen Public Radio, MI. The investigators also provided materials and presented workshops at the NOAA Oral History Workshop in Silver Spring, 2009.

Intangible products are the award of a \$54,000 grant from Michigan Coastal Zone to the Fishtown Preservation Society for the preparation of a site conservation and management plan for the Leland working waterfront in 2008. Increased and interested media coverage also brought many visitors to Fishtown and engaged local residents in discussions of the costs and benefits of preserving local history, artifacts, and the fishery. Donation of a 1926 fishing vessel (fish-tug) and the active involvement of the families of former fishermen in the project are also benefits which can be attributed in part to the project.

Although the project closed down on May 30, 2008, it still continues informally. Oral histories are being volunteered and collected. The monograph is being revised and expanded, and interpretative materials based on the project are being incorporated into the site and into the proposed management plan.

www.fishtownpreservationsociety.org/about.html

~Peter Fricke



A view of Fishtown's waterfront on the Carp (Leland) River looking east from Lake Michigan towards the Lake Leelanau Dam. Carlsson's Fisheries is an active processor/dealer in fish and operates a smoke-house for curing Lake Trout and Chub. (Fishtown Preservation Society, 2007)



Two of the three fishing vessels (fish tugs) owned by the Fishtown Preservation Society. The JANICE SUE is a traditional-style gillnet boat with a full deck house to protect fishermen from lake Michigan winter weather. The JOY has a flat, open deck for fishing with deep-water pound-nets. (Fishtown Preservation Society, 2007)